

Device on gas lamps is a cost-saver

By Philip Sean Curran
Staff Writer

Battery-powered auto ignitors will control 15 gas lamps in South Orange to save the village money while becoming environmentally friendly, local leaders said.

The device, replacing the current burner in the globe of the lamp, uses light-sensitive sensors to turn the street lights off in the daytime and turn them on again at night.

Fifteen residents, including all six trustees and village President Douglas C. Newman, volunteered to monitor the gas lamps and report problems to PSE&G, which owns and maintains the lamps.

The lamps fitted with the device are located outside the volunteers' homes, according to village officials on Friday. The auto ignitors will be monitored continuously, they said.

A year from now, PSE&G will evaluate how things worked during the trial period. If the device worked as it should, local officials said they expect all 1,438 gas lamps in town to be fitted with the auto ignitor by 2013.

South Orange projected a savings of \$200,000 a year in natural gas costs, or 50 percent of what it pays today, said Trustee Howard Levison, who stood beside a lamp installed with the device on

Wyoming Avenue.

Also, it is estimated that the device will prevent approximately 2.25 million pounds of carbon emissions from being released into the air when lamps are functioning only half the time, according to village leaders. Today, lamps burn 24 hours a day.

Levison said that, including manpower, it would take \$1.5 million to install the device throughout the village, with the governing body offering to pick up the cost.

It is not clear if PSE&G will go along with the proposal, as both sides still need to hash out details.

Levison has been pushing for this since before becoming a trustee in 2007. He had sat on the Energy Policy Committee and Citizens Budget Advisory Committee — both committees are sponsored by the village and invite residents to participate — and thought this would be a way to save money.

While Levison was searching the Internet, he came across Minnesota-based Knightronix, which developed and manufactured the auto ignitor.

"We've been working on ignitors and so on for 10 years," said Arnold W. Knight, owner of the company.

One of the first things Levison did once elected was ask U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell Jr., D-8th District, to

write a letter to the head of PSE&G on behalf of the project.

Levison said the utility company initially resisted, arguing that it was not in the business of research and development. But, he said PSE&G Chairman Ralph Izzo became a supporter.

"This is the culmination of a long process that has both a positive environmental impact and a cost-savings to the village," Levison said.

The ignitor was put through two rounds of testing, said Paul Pirro, a technical support leader with PSE&G. The utility company wanted to make sure the device would withstand in outdoor weather conditions and meet other standards.

To test and evaluate the device, PSE&G and three East Coast-based utility companies pooled money through a research group sponsored by the National Gas Association, Pirro said.

In addition to South Orange, the device will be used in Boston, Buffalo and outside Philadelphia. South Orange has used gas lamps to provide street light since before the Civil War. Installed in 1860, they have gone to be a symbol of a community.

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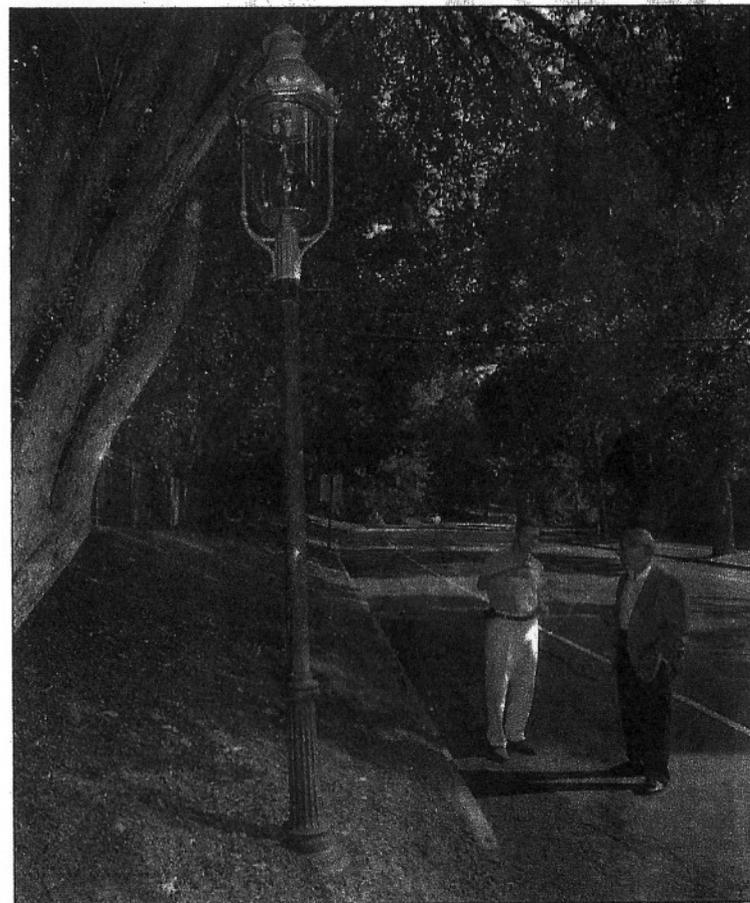


Photo By Barbara Kokkalis

From left, village President Doug C. Newman and Trustee Howard Levison talk about the new device being tested on 15 gas lamps throughout the village.